Nelson Mandela

addresses the Special Committee against *Apartheid* on his historic visit to the United Nations, 22 June 1990

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"The presence here today of Mr. Nelson Mandela is a landmark in our Organization's long involvement in the struggle by the people of South Africa against the *apartheid* system. ...No other human rights situation has caused so much concern and so much distress to the United Nations as that of *apartheid*. ...Now Mr. Mandela is called upon to be one of the main architects of a new South Africa. ...That would usher in an atmosphere free of violence that will in turn open the challenging stage of preparing a new constitution and redressing socio-economic injustices. ...The ebbing of *apartheid* and of racial discrimination from peoples' hearts and minds will be his major gift not only to South Africans, but to the international community as a whole. As a champion of freedom and justice for all, therefore, Mr. Mandela is in his own house today."

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar
Secretary-General of the
United Nations

"Apart from welcoming Mr. Mandela here today, this occasion is also propitious because it affords us the opportunity of getting a first-hand assessment of the progress made so far in South Africa. When the General Assembly reconvenes to consider the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on South Africa, we will no doubt, having had the benefit of the views which Mr. Mandela will express today and which I believe will fully complement the Secretary-General's report, be better disposed to reach a decision on the very important and crucial question of sanctions and the eventual eradication of *apartheid*."

Joseph N. Garba (Nigeria)
President of the 44th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

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Mandela with Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria, left of Mandela), Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid*, other members of the Special Committee and David Dinkins, Mayor of New York City (right of Mrs. Mandela).

"Mr. Mandela, the United Nations Special Committee against *Apartheid,* this unique family of nations and indeed the international community as a whole, welcome you to freedom. Your stature as a symbol of resistance, determination and dedication to eradicate racial discrimination and *apartheid* will continue to inspire even larger segments of world opinion until South Africa achieves the noble principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights."

Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria)
Chairman, Special Committee
against *Apartheid*

"We, the people of New York, have tried in many ways to express our great respect for Nelson Mandela. ...His magnificent faith restores our own. We see how Nelson Mandela's courage and sacrifice are helping to achieve justice in South Africa. ...We, New Yorkers and the entire nation, will follow with intense interest the negotiations that will occur within South Africa about the dismantling of *apartheid* and the establishment of true democracy. In whatever small ways we in New York can encourage that peaceful change, we shall—knowing that in so doing, we move the whole world a measure closer to its ultimate justification."

Mario M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State

Nelson and Winnie Mandela with David Dinkins, Mayor of New York City (left) and the Secretary-General.

Press Conference organized by the Centre against *Apartheid*. On the left is Sotirios Mousouris, Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre. On the right is François Giuliani, Spokesman of the Secretary-General.

Introduction

After his recent release from 27 years of imprisonment and a life-long struggle for peace, freedom and human rights in South Africa, Mr. Nelson Mandela, Deputy President of the African National Congress of South Africa, paid a historic visit to the United Nations on 22 June 1990 and addressed the Special Committee against *Apartheid* at a special meeting held in his honour.

Escorted by Sotirios Mousouris, Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre against *Apartheid,* Mr. Mandela began his visit meeting first with the Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, then paying courtesy calls on Joseph N. Garba (Nigeria), President of the 44th Session of the General Assembly, and Ambassador Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid,* and its members.

At the special meeting of the Special Committee against *Apartheid* statements of welcome were made by the Chairman of the Special Committee, the Secretary-General, the President of the 44th Session of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, Pierre-Louis Blanc (France), and the Governor of New York State, Mario M. Cuomo.

Other speakers consisted of representatives of the Chairmen of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Dragoslav Pejic (Yugoslavia) and Amre M. Moussa (Egypt), respectively.

Speaking on behalf of the five regional groups at the United Nations were: Satteeanund Peerthum (Mauritius) for the African Group; Nasim Ahmed (Pakistan) for the Asian Group; Ivan Sotirov (Bulgaria) for the Eastern European Group; and Hans Otto Brautigam (Federal Republic of Germany) for the Group of Western European and Other States.

Among the special guests at the meeting were the Mayor of New York City, David Dinkins; Deputy Mayor Bill Lynch; Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger; Congressman Bill Green of New York; New York City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman; New York City Commissioner for the United Nations Paul O'Dwyer; entertainers Harry Belafonte,

Cicely Tyson and Randy Weston; boxers Mike Tyson, Ray Leonard and Joe Frazier and President Jose Sulaiman of the World Boxing Council.

Other special guests included prominent personalities from academic, cultural, education and religious circles, as well as anti-*apartheid* and human rights activists.

The programme of activities for the visit concluded with a press conference by Mr. Nelson Mandela, organized by the United Nations Centre against *Apartheid* and a luncheon given in his honour by the African Group at the United Nations.

The text of Mr. Mandela's statement to the Special Committee against *Apartheid* is reproduced in the following pages.

Statement by

Nelson Mandela

Deputy President of the African National Congress of South Africa

Your Excellency Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid;* Your Excellency Mr. Joseph Garba, President of the General Assembly; Your Excellency Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations; Your Excellencies Permanent Representatives; Heads of Observer Missions; ladies and gentlemen, friends and comrades:

We feel especially honoured and privileged to have the possibility today to stand at this particular place, to speak to all of you, who represent the peoples of the world. We are most grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, the Special Committee against *Apartheid,* the Secretary-General and all Member States of the Organization for making it possible for us to be here.

The tragedy is that what has created the need for this gathering and made it seem natural that we must gather in this historic meeting place is the fact of the continuing commission of a crime against humanity. How much better it would have been if we were meeting to celebrate a victory in hand, a dream fulfilled, the triumph of justice over tyrannical past, the realization of the vision enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It will for ever remain an indelible blight on human history that the *apartheid* crime ever occurred. Future generations will surely ask: what error was made that this system established itself in the wake of the adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

It will for ever remain an accusation and a challenge to all men and women of conscience that it took as long as it has before all of us stood up to say enough is enough. Future generations will surely inquire: what error was made that this system established itself in the aftermath of the trials at Nuremberg?

These questions will arise because when this august body, the United Nations, first discussed the South African question, in 1946, it was discussing the issue of racism. They

will be posed because the spur to the establishment of this Organization was the determination of all humanity never again to permit racist theory and practice to dragoon the world into the deathly clutches of war and genocide.

And yet, for all that, a racist tyranny established itself in our country. As they knew would happen, who refused to treat this matter as a quaint historical aberration, this tyranny has claimed its own conclave of victims. It has established its own brutal worth by the number of children it has killed and the orphans, the widows and widowers it can claim as its unique creation.

And still it lives on, provoking strange and monstrous debates about the means that its victims are obliged to use to rid themselves of this intolerable scourge, eliciting arguments from those who choose not to act, that to do nothing must be accepted as the very essence of civilized opposition to tyranny.

We hold it as an inviolable principle that racism must be opposed by all the means that humanity has at its disposal. Wherever it occurs it has the potential to result in a systematic and comprehensive denial of human rights to those who are discriminated against. This is because all racism is inherently a challenge to human rights, because it denies the view that every human being is a person of equal worth with any other, because it treats entire peoples as sub-human.

This is why it was correct to characterize the *apartheid* system as a crime against humanity and appropriate that the international community should decide that it should be suppressed and punishment meted out against its perpetrators. We pay tribute to this Organization and its Member States for this and other decisions and actions it took to expunge this crime.

We also take this opportunity to salute the Special Committee against *Apartheid,* which has been and is a very important instrument in our struggle against the iniquitous and oppressive policies of the South African Government. We salute also the States that make up its membership, which have been unrelenting in their resolve to contribute everything they

could to ensure that the world was mobilized to act against the *apartheid* system.

In this connection also, Sir, allow us to express a well-deserved tribute to your country, Nigeria, which you so ably represent, as did your predecessor in this important office, His Excellency Major-General Joseph Garba, current President of the General Assembly, under whose leadership the United Nations Declaration on South Africa was adopted by consensus at the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly last December.

That Declaration will go down in history as one of the most important documents in the struggle of the international community against *apartheid*. The fact that it was adopted by consensus was itself a telling blow against the *apartheid* system and a vital statement underlining the unity of the world community on the South African question and its resolution.

We look forward to the report that the Secretary-General of the United Nations will submit dealing with the question of the implementation of the Declaration in South Africa. This report will also be important to the extent that it will provide a basis for further decisions by the United Nations regarding future action on the question of *apartheid*.

What must, however, be clear is that the *apartheid* system remains in place. None of the principles laid down in the Declaration has been implemented to provide what the Declaration characterized as an internationally acceptable solution of the South African question. Similarly, the profound and irreversible changes which the Declaration visualized have not yet occurred.

The conclusion from these observations would seem clear to us. It is that nothing which has happened in South Africa calls for a revision of the positions that this Organization has taken in its struggle against *apartheid*. We therefore strongly urge that there should be no relaxation of existing measures. The sanctions that have been imposed by the United Nations and by individual Governments should remain in place.

We also urge that the United Nations should do everything in its power to maintain the unity it achieved when it adopted the Declaration on South Africa last December. We therefore hope that all Member States will continue to act in concert so as not to create any situation in which those who are opposed to change in our country find encouragement to resist change, because some countries would have destroyed the consensus that has been achieved. In this regard, we take this opportunity once more to call on the countries of the European Community, which are holding a summit meeting in a few days' time, themselves to remain faithful to the purposes of the Declaration to whose elaboration they were party and for which they voted.

At the initiative of ANC, the process has begun which could lead to a just political settlement in our country. At our well-known meeting in Cape Town, at the beginning of last month, we agreed with the South African Government on the removal of the obstacles to negotiations which are identified in the Declaration. The process of implementing that agreement has started, but as this distinguished gathering knows, a lot still remains to be done before we can say that a climate conducive to negotiations has been created.

We therefore still have some distance to travel before we undertake the further steps outlined in the Declaration, leading to negotiations for the adoption of a new, democratic constitution. The fact that a good beginning was made in Cape Town should not lead us to conclude that further progress is assured or that we will not have to confront major obstacles in future.

In this regard, we would like to reiterate what we have said before, that we believe that President de Klerk and his colleagues in the leadership of the ruling party are people of integrity. We are of the view that they will abide by decisions that are arrived at in the course of our discussions and negotiations. This, in itself, is an important victory of our common struggle because it is that struggle which has made the cost of maintaining the *apartheid* system too high and helped

to convince the ruling group in our country that changes can no longer be resisted.

It is, however, also true that there are many among our white compatriots who are still committed to the maintenance of the evil system of white minority domination. Some are opposed because of their ideological adherence to racism. Others are resisting because they fear democratic majority rule. Some of these are armed and are to be found within the army and the police.

Outside of these State agencies, other whites are working at a feverish pace to establish paramilitary groups whose stated aim is the physical liquidation of ANC, its leadership and membership, as well as other persons or formations which these right-wing terrorists see as a threat to the continued existence of the system of white minority domination. We cannot afford to underestimate the threat that these defenders of a brutal and continuing reality pose to the whole process of working towards a just political settlement.

The ANC is determined to do everything in its power to ensure speedy movement forward towards the peaceful abolition of the *apartheid* system. To this end we are engaged in many initiatives within South Africa aimed at bringing into the process of negotiations all the people and the representative political formations of our country. We have to overcome the mistrust that exists on both sides and reinforce the understanding that the only victory we should all seek is the victory of the people as a whole and not the victory of one party over another.

It is obvious that none of these processes can be easy. We are, however, inspired by the experience of the people of Namibia and our comrades-in-arms of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), who also overcame the divisions and the mistrust generated by the *apartheid* system, carried out a peaceful political process within a relatively short period of time and are today a proud nation of independent people. We take this opportunity to salute the representatives of the Namibian people who are present in this Hall and acknow-

ledge the debt we owe them for the contribution they have made to our own liberation.

We also salute the front-line States of southern Africa and the rest of our continent for their own enormous contribution to the struggle against *apartheid,* which has brought us to the point today when we can say that the victory of the struggle for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa is within our grasp.

Tribute is also due to the non-aligned countries and Movement and the peoples of the rest of the world for their own sterling efforts in pursuit of the common cause. What we must once more urge is that all these forces should maintain their unity around the perspectives contained in the United Nations and Harare Declarations on South Africa. How fast we progress towards liberation will depend on how successful we are in our efforts to sustain that united resolve.

This is for us a moving moment because we know that as we stand here we are among friends and people of conscience. We know this because we know what you did over the decades to secure my release and the release of other South African political prisoners from Pretoria's dungeons. We thank you most sincerely for this, especially because you have thus given us the opportunity to join hands with you in the search for a speedy solution to the enormous problems facing our country, our region and continent and humanity as a whole.

We know also that you harbour the hope that we will not relent or falter in the pursuit of that common vision which should result in the transformation of South Africa into a country of democracy, justice and peace. Standing before the nations of the world, we make that commitment, strengthened by the knowledge that you will fight on side by side with us until victory is achieved.

We also take this opportunity to extend warm greetings to all others who fight for their liberation and their human rights, including the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara. We commend their struggles to you, convinced that we are

all moved by the fact that freedom is indivisible, convinced that the denial of the rights of one diminishes the freedom of others.

We thank you for your kind invitation to us to address this gathering and for the opportunity it has given us to pay homage to you all: to the Secretary-General, to the President of the General Assembly, to the Special Committee against *Apartheid* and to the United Nations itself for the work that has been done to end the *apartheid* crime against humanity.

The distance we still have to travel is not long. Let us travel it together. Let us, by our joint actions, vindicate the purposes for which this Organization was established and create a situation wherein its Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will become part of the body of law on which will be based the political and social order of a new South Africa. Our common victory is assured.

Photo on Back Cover:
Nelson Mandela receiving standing ovation at the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations.

Mandela with world-renowned boxers Mike Tyson (2nd from left), Ray Leonard (right of Mandela) and Joe Frazier (3rd from right).

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